



e-Planning, Urban Science and Digital Transition

MIT-DUSP **Monday Lunch Speaker Series**

"City Arena" (9-255)

November 13, 12h30- 2 PM, Talk:

Lunch is available at 12h15

Designing and evaluating emerging technologies to address loneliness in later life: promises and pitfalls

Barbara Barbosa Neves

Speaker:

Dr. Barbara Barbosa Neves, Monash Data Futures Institute, Monash University

Discussants:

Catherine D'Ignazio, Associate Professor of Urban Science and Planning

Links:

<https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/barbara-barbosa-neves>

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/catherine-dignazio>

<http://web.mit.edu/uis/e-planning2023/speakerseries.html>

Lunch Talk: **"City Arena" (9-255), November 13, 12:30 - 2 PM**

Designing and evaluating emerging technologies to address loneliness in later life: promises and pitfalls

In 2023, the US Surgeon General's declaration of loneliness as a public health crisis echoed the pioneering steps taken by the UK in 2018 when appointing the world's first Minister for Loneliness. Loneliness has become a serious public concern due to its detrimental effects on the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Frail older people (aged 65+) living in care homes and alone in the community are particularly vulnerable to loneliness, which increases their risk of illnesses like dementia, stroke, and depression. As digital technologies have the potential to create opportunities for social connection, they have been heralded as solutions to the problem. To explore the role of technology in addressing loneliness in later life, I conducted research combining sociological and computer science approaches to co-develop technology-based interventions for these older groups. This talk combines my studies on various technologies – communication apps, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence – to provide a critical perspective on how we can better understand and respond to loneliness in later life.

Barbara Barbosa Neves

Dr Barbara Barbosa Neves (PhD, FRSA) is an award-winning sociologist of technology and ageing. She is an internationally recognised expert on loneliness, social isolation, and digital inequalities among older people. Her research has been used to improve technology design for frail older people and to inform care practices and policy in Canada, Australia, and Portugal.

Barbara has a background in sociology and human-computer interaction. Prior to moving to Australia, she was an Associate Director at the Technologies for Aging Gracefully Lab, Department of Computer Science, University of Toronto, Canada. She is currently at Monash University in Australia.

She has received 24 prestigious awards and honours in North America, Japan, Europe (UK, Belgium, Portugal), and Australia. For example, in 2022, she was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (UK). In 2019, she was named by the ABC and the University of Sydney among the Top 5 Humanities and Social Science Scholars in Australia. She has delivered 42 invited keynotes and 73 talks across five continents.

Barbara has received over 5 million dollars in competitive funding from Australia, the European Union, and Canada. She has published widely in top-tier journals/outlets in Social and Computer Sciences and is a regular media commentator. Her work has been featured in ABC, The Guardian, SBS, CBC, Channel 7, among others.